

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 334

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT--PARA FIVE LINE NINETEEN WORD FOUR)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, GY
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT - DRAFT

REF: STATE 19883

1. EMBASSY COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGES IN DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ARE CONTAINED HEREIN.

2. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE REPORT CONCERNING "VITAL NEEDS" BE AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:
QUOTE. THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSCIOUS OF THE BASIC NEEDS OF ITS POPULATION AND IS STRIVING TO MEET THEM WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE. SOME EAST INDIAN GUYANESE CLAIM THAT THE PRESENT BLACK LEADERSHIP OF GUYANA GIVES PREFERENCE TO THE BLACK POPULATION IN SUCH AREAS AS LOW COST HOUSING AND GOVERNMENT JOBS. WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT EAST INDIAN RICE FARMERS HAVE BEEN PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARIES OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AGRICULTURAL POLICIES. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE REPORTS OF CORRUPTION TO THE BENEFIT OF THE NATION'S POLITICAL RULERS AND THE BLACK MINORITY. END QUOTE.

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3. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS UNAWARE OF ANY ALLEGATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT GIVES PREFERENCE TO THE BLACK POPULATION WITH REFERENCE TO HEALTH CARE OR EDUCATION. END COMMENT.

4. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT PARAGRAPH 5(A) BE AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:
QUOTE: THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA HAS PARTIAL CONTROL OF

THE MEDIA. IT OWNS ONE RADIO STATION (THERE IS NO TV IN GUYANA) AND TWO OF THE THREE DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND ONE OF TWO LEADING WEEKLIES. THE GOVERNMENT OWNED MEDIA REFLECT GOVERNMENT POLICIES FAITHFULLY. THE OPPOSITION PAPERS--ONE DAILY PUBLISHED BY THE OPPOSITION PARTY, THE PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY, AND THE WEEKLY CATHOLIC STANDARD BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH-- ENGAGE IN UNINHIBITED AND CONSISTENT CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. DURING 1975 AND 1976 THESE NEWSPAPERS OCCASIONALLY WERE HAMPERED BY GOVERNMENT RESTRAINTS ON IMPORT OF NEWS-PRINT AND EQUIPMENT, BUT IN 1977 THERE WERE NO INDICATIONS

THAT THE GOVERNMENT PREVENTED THEM FROM OBTAINING SUPPLIES. AT AN OCTOBER 1977 MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION, SEVERAL SPEAKERS STATED THAT THERE IS QUOTE GRAVE DANGER TO THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN GUYANA END QUOTE BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. THIS ALLEGATION WAS STRONGLY DENIED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF INTERFERENCE IN THE RIGHT OF ASSEMBLY OR RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION. DURING 1976 THE GOVERNMENT ASSUMED FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN GUYANA, INCLUDING THOSE RUN BY THE VARIOUS CHURCHES. END QUOTE.

5. WITH REFERENCE TO PARAGRAPH 5(C) "FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS" WE CANNOT CITE SPECIFIC "EVIDENCE" TO SUPPORT THE ALLEGATIONS OF ELECTION RIGGING. ALTHOUGH CONFIDENTIAL

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IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT BALLOT STUFFING TOOK PLACE AND THERE IS DOUBT THAT THE PNC GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE ACHIEVED A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY WITHOUT ELECTION RIGGING, NO LEGALLY ADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE OR PROOF TO SUBSTANTIATE THE CHARGES HAS BEEN FORMALLY PRESENTED. ALSO THE RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET AND PARLIAMENT DOES NOT SUBSTANTIATE CHARGES AS STATED IN THE REPORT THAT ELECTION RIGGING PREVENTED THE EAST INDIANS FROM BEING ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED.

THE RACIAL MIXTURE OF THE TOTAL OF 67 PERSONS IN THE CABINET AND PARLIAMENT IS 30 EAST INDIAN, 29 BLACK, AND THE REMAINING 8 ARE AMERINDIAN, WHITE OR A MIXTURE OF BLACK AND EAST INDIAN. ACCORDINGLY, THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT PARAGRAPH 5, SUBPARAGRAPH C READ AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1968 AND 1973 CHARGES OF FRAUD AND RIGGING WERE WIDESPREAD. ALTHOUGH THOSE MAKING THE CHARGES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SUBSTANTIATE THEIR ALLEGATIONS IN COURT, IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT FRAUD AND RIGGING WERE PRACTICED. THE OPPOSITION PARTY ALLEGES PUBLICLY THAT BECAUSE OF THIS FRAUD AND RIGGING IT IS INADEQUATELY REPRESENTED IN THE PARLIAMENT. THE GOVERNMENT REJECTS THESE ALLEGATIONS. END QUOTE

6. WITH THE CHANGES SUGGESTED ABOVE, THE EMBASSY CONCURS
IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON GUYANA CONTAINED IN REFTEL.
BURKE

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